

Arms and Men

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The President and the Staff Work

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FROM Washington tomorrow the President is to make what is described as his first major policy statement since his inauguration three months ago.

It would be too much to ask, or expect, that in one speech he would clarify all the serious issues of military and foreign policy which have accumulated in the period. Yet the issues are serious; they are growing, and the time is rapidly approaching when some over-all indication of the general direction of our foreign and military planning must be given.

The President has proceeded so far in a way very characteristic of his own methods of leadership, and characteristic, as well, of his military background. Like any good general, he has started by assembling his "team," his staff of strong and competent people, and parceling out the jobs among them. While the staff work has been going on he has refrained from interfering with the men he has asked to do it; he has supported them in public, and his most frequent answer to questions of foreign or military policy has been that the matter is "under study," or "we are waiting on detailed recommendations," or "there has been no decision."

It takes no great effort of the imagination to see behind the lineaments of the Eisenhower administration the outlines of a general staff. This is not said in criticism; the general staff system is one of the most effective engines of public administration ever devised, and the President has applied it to the American Executive with an admirable subtlety and flexibility. But the outlines are there.

Mr. Brownell is a kind of G-1 (personnel); Mr. Humphrey is a kind of over-all G-4 (logistics, or, in plainer language, how much money and supplies you can get to do what you want to do); the G-2 section (which combines not only intelligence and psychological and propaganda warfare but also evaluation and recommendations on broad policy) is primarily Mr. Dulles' job, with the aid of Mr. Allen Dulles, Mr. C. D. Jackson and some others; while G-3 (plans, training and operations) is the difficult province of Mr. Wilson, the Secretary of Defense, along with Mr. Stassen as Mutual Security Administrator.

Of course, the actual lines are not quite as sharp as this would suggest. State has operative responsibilities; the Treasury has wider and more subtle obligations than those usually felt

eral scheme is roughly recognizable, and it is more or less on this scheme that the various departments have plunged into their work.

This sort of division of labor and intensive study has many real advantages. But in public administration it also has certain defects. A military staff can be set to work in complete secrecy and seclusion to bring up by a pre-determined date a fixed solution, in which all factors have been thoroughly integrated, co-ordinated and embodied in the vast machinery of the operations orders, all set to go on H-hour of D-day. In civil life, of course, there is no D-day; there is not much seclusion, and very little secrecy. The various staff departments can much more easily go off on tangents; the issues with which they are dealing are of too vital import to the everyday man and woman to be completely hidden, or to be successfully met without popular support, and it is inevitable that very soon there are "off-the-record" conferences or "executive session" appearances, such as those which Secretaries Dulles and Wilson have recently given, which come out. These set up seeming conflicts or confusions of policy, clamors in Congress and public uncertainties, which can sap the whole program as it is finally put together.

Applied in the great fields of national and civil life, the system puts an even greater premium on the top man—the directing head who must bring policy and strategy into a rational and intelligible framework—than it puts in military life on the commanding general.

President Eisenhower has been well advised to wait on his staff studies. But if not tomorrow, then very soon, he will have to pull the whole work together and give it point and purpose. He cannot have the Secretary of the Treasury demanding economies which the Secretary of Defense cannot meet; or the Secretary of Defense eviscerating the military machine to a point where it cannot support the policies of the Secretary of State, or the Secretary of State reversing strategic policies on which the military establishment has been constructed. As the President made clear in regard to military economies most of the issues on which the various staff officers have been so hard at work are issues which only the President and to which only he can give the kind of unity and drive which will keep the coun-

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